

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A contents-information transmission system comprising:
a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of
5 different levels of at least one of copyright protection and
information secrecy is assigned;
an authentication apparatus;
means for transmitting said one of the different levels from
the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication
10 apparatus;
means provided in the authentication apparatus for comparing
said transmitted one of the different levels with a predetermined
reference level; and
means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission
15 of contents information from the authentication apparatus to the
contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of
said comparing.
2. An authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-
20 information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at
least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is
assigned, the authentication apparatus comprising:
means for receiving said one of the different levels from the
contents-information handling apparatus;
25 means for comparing said received one of the different levels
with a predetermined reference level; and

means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said comparing.

5 3. An authentication apparatus as recited in claim 2, wherein said one of the different levels is represented by copyrighted data.

4. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different
10 levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication apparatus deciding a level of the contents-information handling apparatus which relates to at least one of copyright protection and
15 information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to said decided level; the contents-information handling apparatus comprising:

20 means for storing data representative of said one of the different levels; and

 means for transmitting the data representative of said one of the different levels to the authentication apparatus.

25 5. A contents-information handling apparatus as recited in claim 4, wherein said data comprise copyrighted data.

6. A method of data transmission between an authentication apparatus and a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus;

10 comparing said transmitted one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and

selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said comparing.

7. A method as recited in claim 6, wherein said one of the different levels is represented by copyrighted data.

20 8. A method as recited in claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting predetermined data from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus; and

25 transmitting said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus in response to the predetermined data received by the

contents-information handling apparatus.

9. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different
5 levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, and an authentication apparatus deciding a level of the contents-information handling apparatus which relates to at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting
10 transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to said decided level; a transmission medium comprising:

means for connecting the contents-information handling apparatus and the authentication apparatus with each other;
15 means for enabling said one of the different levels to be transmitted from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus; and
means for enabling the contents information to be transmitted from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information
20 handling apparatus.

10. A contents-information transmission system comprising:
a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information
25 secrecy;
an authentication apparatus;

means for transmitting data representative of said capability from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is copyrighted;

- 5 means provided in the authentication apparatus for judging the data transmitted from the contents-information handling apparatus; and

10 means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of second contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said judging.

11. An authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus comprising:

15 means for receiving data representative of said capability from the contents-information handling apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is copyrighted;

- 20 means for judging the received data; and

 means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of second contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said judging.

- 25 12. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability

regarding at least one of copyright protection and information
secrecy, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the
contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication
apparatus deciding whether or not the contents-information

- 5 handling apparatus has a capability regarding at least one of
copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication
apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of first
contents information to the contents-information handling
apparatus in response to a result of said deciding; the contents-
10 information handling apparatus comprising:

means for storing data representative of said capability of the
contents-information handling apparatus, the data containing
second contents information which is copyrighted; and

- 15 means for transmitting the data to the authentication
apparatus.

13. A method of data transmission between an authentication
apparatus and a contents-information handling apparatus having a
capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and
20 information secrecy, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting data representative of said capability from the
contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication
apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is
copyrighted;

- 25 judging the data transmitted from the contents-information
handling apparatus; and

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means for connecting the contents-information handling apparatus and the authentication apparatus with each other;

means for enabling data representative of the capability of the contents-information handling apparatus to be transmitted to the authentication apparatus, the data containing second contents information which is copyrighted; and

- 5 means for enabling the first contents information to be transmitted from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus.

16. A reliability deciding apparatus for deciding a reliability of an
10 object apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, the reliability deciding apparatus comprising:

 means for transmitting predetermined data to the object apparatus;

- 15 means for receiving response data from the object apparatus as a reply to the transmission of the predetermined data;

 means for storing information representing a plurality of public keys corresponding to the different reliabilities respectively;

- means for selecting one from among the public keys and
20 decrypting the response data into a decryption-resultant data in accordance with the selected public key;

 means for deciding whether or not the predetermined data and the decryption-resultant data are equal to each other; and

- means for, when it is decided that the predetermined data
25 and the decryption-resultant data are equal to each other, deciding that a reliability of the object apparatus is equal to one of the

different reliabilities which corresponds to the selected public key.

17. A reliability decided apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, wherein a
5 reliability of the reliability decided apparatus is decided by a reliability deciding apparatus, the reliability decided apparatus comprising:

means for receiving predetermined data from the reliability deciding apparatus;

10 means for storing information of a secret key corresponding to specified one of the different reliabilities;

means for encrypting the predetermined data into encryption-resultant data in response to the secret key; and

15 means for transmitting the encryption-resultant data to the reliability deciding apparatus.

18. A reliability deciding apparatus for deciding a reliability of an object apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, the reliability deciding apparatus
20 comprising:

means for transmitting predetermined data to the object apparatus;

25 means for receiving response data from the object apparatus as a reply to the transmission of the predetermined data, the response data containing a data piece peculiar to the object apparatus;

means for storing a plurality of reference data pieces
corresponding to the different reliabilities respectively;

means for extracting the peculiar data piece from the
response data;

5 means for selecting one from among the reference data pieces
and deciding whether or not the selected reference data piece and
the extracted peculiar data piece are equal to each other; and

means for, when it is decided that the selected reference data
piece and the extracted peculiar data piece are equal to each other,
10 deciding that a reliability of the object apparatus is equal to one of
the different reliabilities which corresponds to the selected
reference data piece.

19. A reliability decided apparatus to which one of different
15 reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, wherein a
reliability of the reliability decided apparatus is decided by a
reliability deciding apparatus, the reliability decided apparatus
comprising:

means for receiving predetermined data from the reliability
20 deciding apparatus;

means for storing a data piece which is peculiar to the
reliability decided apparatus, and which corresponds to specified
one of the different reliabilities;

means for encrypting the predetermined data into
25 encryption-resultant data in response to the data piece; and

means for transmitting the encryption-resultant data to the

reliability deciding apparatus.

20. A reliability deciding apparatus for deciding a reliability of an
object apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding
5 information secrecy is assigned, the reliability deciding apparatus
comprising:

means for transmitting predetermined data to the object
apparatus;

means for receiving response data from the object apparatus
10 as a reply to the transmission of the predetermined data, the
response data containing a data piece peculiar to the object
apparatus;

means for decrypting the response data into decryption-
resultant data;

15 means for extracting the peculiar data piece from the
decryption-resultant data;

means for executing predetermined calculation between the
extracted peculiar data piece and the predetermined data to
generate a calculation-resultant data piece;

20 means for compressing the calculation-resultant data piece
into a compression-resultant data piece according to a
predetermined function;

means for storing a plurality of reference data pieces
corresponding to the different reliabilities respectively;

25 means for processing the reference data pieces into
respective processing-resultant data pieces according to the

predetermined function;

means for selecting one from among the processing-resultant data pieces and deciding whether or not the selected processing-resultant data piece and the compression-resultant data piece are
5 equal to each other; and

means for, when it is decided that the selected processing-resultant data piece and the compression-resultant data piece are equal to each other, deciding that a reliability of the object apparatus is equal to one of the different reliabilities which
10 corresponds to the selected processing-resultant data piece.

21. A reliability decided apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, wherein a reliability of the reliability decided apparatus is decided by a
15 reliability deciding apparatus, the reliability decided apparatus comprising:

means for receiving predetermined data from the reliability deciding apparatus;

means for storing a peculiar data piece which is peculiar to
20 the reliability decided apparatus, and which corresponds to specified one of the different reliabilities;

means for encrypting the predetermined data into encryption-resultant data in response to the peculiar data piece;

means for compressing the peculiar data piece into a
25 compression-resultant data piece according to a predetermined function;

means for combining the encryption-resultant data and the compression-resultant data piece into response data; and

means for transmitting the response data to the reliability deciding apparatus.

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22. A recording medium storing a computer program for controlling an authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, the computer program comprising the steps of receiving said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus; comparing said received one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said comparing.

23. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication apparatus deciding a level of the contents-information handling apparatus which relates to at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to

the contents-information handling apparatus in response to said decided level; a recording medium storing a computer program for controlling the contents-information handling apparatus, the computer program comprising the step of transmitting data
5 representative of said one of the different levels to the authentication apparatus.

24. A recording medium storing a computer program for controlling an authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-
10 information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the computer program comprising the steps of receiving data representative of said capability from the contents-information handling apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is copyrighted;
15 judging the received data; and selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of second contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said judging.

20 25. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication
25 apparatus deciding whether or not the contents-information handling apparatus has a capability regarding at least one of

copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of first contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said deciding; a recording

5 medium storing a computer program for controlling the contents-information handling apparatus, the computer program comprising the step of transmitting data representative of said capability of the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication

10 apparatus, the data containing second contents information which is copyrighted.